

CHAPTER V

THE MEDIAN AND PERSIAN EMPIRES

I. MEDIA: COUNTRY AND CUSTOMS

It is a Median custom to elect the bravest person as king, but this does not generally prevail, being confined to the mountain tribes. The custom for the kings to have many wives is more general, it is found among all the mountaineers also, but they are not permitted to have less than five. In the same manner the women think it honorable for husbands to have as many wives as possible, and esteem it a misfortune if they have less than five.

The King.
Strabo xi.
13. 11.

While the rest of Media is very fertile, the northern and mountainous part is barren. The people subsist upon the produce of trees. They make cakes of apples, sliced and dried, and bread of roasted almonds; they express a wine from some kind of roots. They eat the flesh of wild animals and do not breed any tame animals. So much then respecting the Medes. As to the laws and customs in common use throughout the whole of Media, as they are the same as those of the Persians in consequence of the establishment of the Persian empire, I shall speak of them when I give an account of the latter nation.

II. EMPIRE OF DARIUS

The following account of the Persian Empire, composed by Darius, is given in an inscription. It describes the composition of the empire and illustrates the King's reverence for Ormazd, the supreme deity of the Persians. *Records of the Past*, v. 151-3.

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Extent of his empire.

Ancient World, 50 f.

Ormazd (A-hura Mazda), the supreme deity.

Map, *Ancient World*, before p. I.

The empire did not in fact include Sparta.

Protection and maintenance of peace.

Notice his high conception of duty to the empire.

Chief of the gods is Ormazd, who created heaven and earth, and created mankind; who gave to men their various fortunes; who created Darius, King of many Kings. I am Darius the great King, the King of Kings, the King of the nations of every different tongue; the King of the vast and wide world; son of Hystaspes the Achæmenian: a Persian, son of a Persian. Darius the King says: Under the protection of Ormazd, these are the countries which I hold besides Persia: and whatever tribute I have commanded them to bring, that they brought; and whatever things I commanded them to do, that they did; and they fulfilled my laws. Media, Susiana, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia, Zarangia, Arachosia, Sattagydia, Gandaria, India; those Cimmerians who are called the Humurga, those other Cimmerians who wear gloves on their hands, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Capadocia, Sparta, Ionia, those Cimmerians who dwell beyond the seas, in the land of Scythia; those Ionians who wear helmets on their heads; the Budians, the Cosæans, the Masians, and the land of Cartha.

Darius the king says: When Ormazd saw that these countries were at war with each other continually, after he had given me to them and had appointed me to be King over them, then I the king under the protection of Ormazd kept them all quiet in their right places. Whatever I said, that they did, and they wished the thing that I wished. And if thou shouldst say thus, "Surely those nations will quarrel and split asunder who now obey Darius the King," look well at those statutes which support my throne, and if thou dost recognize them, then it will be known to thee that the spear of the Persian reaches far! Then it will be known to thee, that the men of Persia, far beyond their own country, wars are wont to wage.

Darius the King says, "All this that I have done, under the protection of Ormazd, I have done it. Ormazd gave me the strength to do these things. May Ormazd protect me from everything that is evil, both my family and my country, this I pray Ormazd: may Ormazd grant it! O man! whatever Ormazd commands, do thou not rebel against it!

III. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF DARIUS

Near the western border of Iran stands the isolated rock of Behistan, on one side rising almost perpendicular to a height of 1700 feet. More than 300 feet above the base Darius the king had his artists smooth a large irregular oblong. On the surface thus prepared they sculptured scenes from his religious and military life and a chronicle of his deeds. The selection given below is from H. C. Tolman, *The Behistan Inscription of King Darius*.

Says Darius the king: Afterward there was one man, a Magian, Gaumata by name: . . . he thus deceived the people; I am Bardiya the son of Cyrus, brother of Cambyses; afterward all the people became estranged from Cambyses and went over to him, both Persia and Media and the other provinces; he seized the kingdom; 9 days in the month Garmapada were in course—he thus seized the kingdom; afterwards Cambyses died by a self-imposed death.

Says Darius the king: This kingdom which Gaumata the Magian took from Cambyses, this kingdom from long ago was the possession of our family; afterwards Gaumata the Magian took from Cambyses both Persia and Media and the other provinces; he seized the power and made it his own possession; he became king.

Says Darius the king: There was not a man neither a Persian nor a Median nor any one of our family who could

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make Gaumata the Magian deprived of the kingdom; the people feared his tyranny; they feared he would slay the many who knew Bardiya formerly; for this reason he would slay the people, "that they might not know me that I am not Bardiya the son of Cyrus;" anyone did not dare to say anything against Gaumata the Magian until I came; afterwards I asked Auramazda for help; Auramazda bore me aid; 10 days in the month Bagayadish were in course—I thus with few men slew that Gaumata the Magian and what men were his foremost allies; . . . I took the kingdom from him; by the grace of Auramazda I became king; Auramazda gave me the kingdom.

Says Darius the king: The kingdom which was taken away from our family, this I put in its place; I establish it on its foundations; as it was formerly so I made it; the sanctuaries which Gaumata the Magian destroyed I restored; for the people, the revenue and the personal property and the estates and the royal residences which Gaumata the Magian took from them I restored; I established the state on its foundation, both Persia and Media and the other provinces; as it was formerly, so I brought back what had been taken away; by the grace of Auramazda this I did; I labored that our royal house I might establish in its place; as it was formerly so I made it; I labored by the grace of Auramazda that Gaumata the Magian might not take away our royal house. . . .

Says Darius the king: For this reason Auramazda bore me aid and the other gods which are, because I was not an enemy, I was not a deceiver, I was not a wrong-doer, neither I nor my family; according to rectitude I ruled nor made I my power an oppression to those who praise me; the man who helped my house, him who should be well esteemed I esteemed; the man who would

destroy it, him who should deserve punishment, I punished.

IV. PERSIAN CUSTOMS

These are the customs, so far as I know, which the Persians practice: Images and temples and altars they do not account it lawful to erect, nay they even charge with folly those who do these things; and this, as it seems to me, because they do not account the gods to be in the likeness of men, as do the Hellenes. But it is their wont to perform sacrifices to Zeus, going up to the most lofty of the mountains, and the whole circle of the heavens they call Zeus: and they sacrifice to the Sun and the Moon and the Earth, to Fire and to Water and to the Winds: these are the only gods to whom they have sacrificed even from the first; but they have learnt also to sacrifice to Aphrodite Urania, having learnt it from the Assyrians and the Arabians. . . .

Religion.

Herodotus, i.
131.

*Ancient
World, 54 f.*

Now this is the manner of sacrifice for the gods aforesaid which is established among the Persians:—they make no altars, neither do they kindle fire; and when they mean to sacrifice they use no libation nor music of the pipe nor chaplets nor meal for sprinkling; but when a man wishes to sacrifice to any one of the gods, he leads the animal for sacrifice to an unpolluted place and calls upon the god, having his tiara wreathed round generally with a branch of myrtle. For himself alone separately the man who sacrifices may not request good things in his prayer but he prays that it may be well with all the Persians and with the King; for he himself also is included of course in the whole body of Persians. And when he has cut up the victim into pieces and boiled the flesh, he spreads a layer of the freshest grass and especially clover, upon which he places forthwith all the pieces of flesh; and when he has

**Manner of
sacrifice.**

Herodotus i
132.

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